Early Work 1996-2006

Adam Fieled

Cover photo by Matt Stevenson
Adam Fieled in South Philadelphia, 2004
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Credits

Argotist Online, P.F.S. Post— "Song for Maria"

Big Bridge, Melancholia's Tremulous Dreadlocks— "Twisted Limbs"

Eratio— "What Needs No Myth"

fieralingue— "Pigs and Planes"

Great Works— "To Gil Ott," "Façade," "To Bruce Nauman"

Hinge Online— "Prince," "Disappear," "Technician of Tough Love," "On Love"

hutt, Starfish— "Song for Genevieve"

luzmag— "Red Life"

Mipoesias, Mirage— "Wittgenstein's Song"

PennSound— "Clean," "Disappear," "Feel," "Ode On Jazz," "Pigs and Planes," "What Needs No Myth," "To March," "To Bruce Nauman"

Seven Corners— "Ode On Jazz"

Siren's Silence— "Clean"

Synchronized Chaos— "Dominique," "Stoning the Devil"

X-Peri— "Feel"

Clean

I gave myself an enema the other day,
took some antibiotics.
Thought to myself,
"This is really the poet's
place in the world—
not sitting in some pasture,
not smoking in some bar,
not fucking someone lovely,
not courting Gods or Jesus.

No.

The poet's place
is kneeling down,
naked,
with something
or other
stuck
up his ass,
in a desperate
attempt
to get
clean."

April 1998, North Halls, State College

Prince

Wesley wore silk pajamas—
he looked very regal,
planted before the floor TV.

I would sit next to him,
waiting for the ugly nurses
to feed us our pills, and take our pulses.

He told me about his car,
his mother,
his buddies— the catalogue

of adolescent normalcy—

and you wouldn't think
he was schizophrenic,
listening to him speak.

In fact, I thought
he was a prince,

Albeit one who was,
like most princes,

at the mercy of his servants.

May 1998, Paul Smyers bookstore, State College

Disappear

The bleached blonde shook
the two white bowls together,
one atop the other,
making a Caesar salad.

Another bleached blonde, my
girlfriend,
watched me watching
this meticulous process.

Dug her engine-red
nails into
the sweet secrecy
of my inner thigh,

Saying, wordlessly,
"If you think that's
a good trick,
You should see me
disappear
sometime."

May 1998, Shlow Library, State College

The dawn broke over our bodies

for Jennifer Strawser

The room spun a wide arc, I feigned indifference, compact blue sky tightened, you sighed, I put a silent right hand on your thigh, heavens opened, venom woke, wound itself around us, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Limitless, primitive flower, first flush of power, teenage friction, skirt-chase eyelids, lipstick spasms, ingrained anger, you panted relentless, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Drunken boated, Rimbaud ice cream, I heaved, felt myself burning, bleeding, too-close breath, breasts, I felt you perfectly as an ideal forest, the dawn broke over our bodies—

The leaves died from gyrations down, into a pained place where static passion moved, was moving, we lost it, I hated you for the coming, into the coming day, slobbering dogs, crosses making Christ himself cower, absolving saints, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Our souls' music created sex for its own amusement, passing time, my sex standing for yours, bound in the breathing of stars, cutting into life deeper, space-shuttle hurtling skyward, sports car on receptive freeway, the dawn broke over our bodies—

September 1996, North Halls, Holmes Hall, State College

To Gil Ott

What
naturally
becomes
a soul's
ascension?

Children's
gestures
transmuted
willfully
into

armor
against
waves
pushing
downwards?

Excavation
of roots
doesn't equal
destruction
of such—

death,
a going
deeper,
higher,
paradox.

2004, University of Pennsylvania, West Philadelphia

To March

Tremulous time— rain-laden flowers
threatening to burst forth— sodden
branches quiver. Exhalations still
visible, people linger in watery streets,
hydroplaning tires glisten.

Blue patches line the sky—
droplets engorge terraces— cups
of coffee, especially poignant for
winter-weary souls in still cafes.

Nature at the end begins to forge
invisible buds— suppressed grass
dreams succulence. Clouds shroud
puddles. Lengthening days.

A correspondence exists in me
for this— hovering on fertility's edges,
writing to find the entire note,
the perfect kiss, moments of grace after
longing, fighting. Every cloud echoes
my reaching. Wanderlust for forgotten forms,

skies abandoned by vapors fixed
to the earth. My mind is hung with sun
flowers springing, lands uncreated,
dim, unpupil'd eyes, needing deeper

roots for a sturdier birth. A trumpet call—
thought processions— friends, loves.
Hands molding, fretfully, with nascent
skill, permanent tapestries. Mud below,

shadows above. Planted seeds poised—
movement, chasms filled. Words
on a wing, where are they? Could I be
writing them now, this normal day, over

cigarettes, George Eliot, coffee, sadness?
Before the bud erupts, it issues a sigh for
the effort, like of priests or of lovers—
crafting the genuine, born out of gladness.

March 27, 2004, Live at Kelly Writers House, West Philadelphia

Façade

I'm that façade
    etched in brick
you brought to bear on one level

opened
    able to close
connecting landscape to sky

it's fine
    it's blue
a public secret for the greater good

dark lions
    freeze
near portals limned with prey

sun-backed
    moon-streaked
it all adds up and it's enough

2004, Logan Square, Philadelphia

To Bruce Nauman

The Mister who goes beyond recognition
of clichés of iron-bound self-hood
regenerating new notions that clank
mad paint onto our being, beating at
the doors of universities like Genet a thief
but a marijuana consciousness of absurdity
epitomizing West Coast anti-notions walking around the perimeters of art
definitions in a ten-gallon hat, with mescal on tap,
and breeding horses to boot, boots jangling
among the mind's fatal mood clowns, with
hard-ons to be bent over, so wicked into
the art-world that will not recover
from earnest strangeness made concrete,
creating new forms like something else,
a convention of Jehovahs Witnesses,
better yet the troupe of players that caught
the conscience of Claudius doing Beckett,
Nauman playing Pozzo, Picasso's ashes set
onstage in place of Vladimir and Estragon,
while Lucky gets to be Jasper Johns or
something, concluding that to make up is
to fall down, to fall down is to take form,
to take form is to become a fountain,
and some fountains are worth making—

See him square the circle in white shirt
as the day rages blankly outside, too tired
of its ephemeral heart to even conclude
immediately, squares of seasons apt to linger,
then emptiness, as though this funny project
were a mandala of Buddha, to prove that life
is not a circle, but rather sharp definite
edges, with many clusters of shoddy wood between
loaves of stale craving-bread, one shoulder
raised higher than other, bare feet slow
but mad as Nijinsky, make it a ritual
to feed soul's need not for religion itself
but for the feeling of religion, the joy of
being bounded, picture itself presented as
square, tiny in a little book I ordered
two years ago in a fit of delirium, now
I've propped it up like a collapsible urn of

ashes of dead heroes, only the captain
sits with horses watching the wheels of
temporal anti-tenderness spin, conventional
concepts raised up then razed, as in r-a-z-e-d,
does he still have the black pants I wonder?
Maybe he's just a ghost or an astral spirit,
somebody's Ariel—

Simple, strategic, rolling around on the floor,
looking into the camera's un-droll eye with
hyper-droll drollness, essence of droll but
somehow twisted beyond mere Dada ha-ha
into indeterminate snickers of profound weirdness
that will eventually beget a sullen fame,
spreading but not reaching cactus-y wilderness
where in summertime the living, I guess, is easy,
at least more so than playing with your balls,
not that the minimal has no weight but
that such weight leaves no room for developments
of a righteously figurative nature unless
one has sophisticated intellectual equipment
which, of course, he does—

2003, Logan Square, Philadelphia

Red Life

mark rothko
came to me in
a dream and said,
each color chunk is
a way of life,
you must choose.

i'm wearing a red
sweater, that's my choice.
anything not to be
bloodless.

2005, Logan Square, Philadelphia

Wittgenstein's Song

Merely brilliant is no match
for being intimate. When you catch
a wave that breaks, you can only
half-determine its' course. Lonely
is the determined man, whether
it's he who decides his fate or fetters
the world lays on him. This
I learned from a young man's kiss.
Thus, I've learned, said nothing.
To be silent is something
for the wise to practice. Words
go too far. How much have we heard
worth holding onto? How much said
that can placate what we dread?

2005, Last Drop Coffeehouse, Center City Philadelphia

Technician of Tough Love

for Alexandra Grilikhes 1932-2003

Puzzling your way back from nothingness
you must be; if the Void is an abyss,
to conquer it in life is impossible.
There is a blessing in ritual,
but it is all from one pull.

Your private treasures I never knew;
beyond the Indian drums (of which you had
a collection), was there something,
some book, some record, you prized
above all others?

You were a technician of tough love,
collected hearts; had a passion
for Chinese herbs boiled down
to the root, to retrieve essential.,
healing strength;

ministered weary angels
needing succor, familiar with your tongue,
your breath, the beating of your heart.
Saintly, to feed some soul's need
for flesh, nectar, sanctuary,
oblivion;

now it's death's mystery
from which you can't escape—
maybe. I profess and confess
utter bewilderment.

Remember lunches
at Essene, 4th Street, the crutch
of good caffeinated coffee, conversation,
a few hours rest; was eternity
there, watching you, your Muse,
waiting silently to bear Her naked flanks
to your disciplined pleasure?
Who would know but Her
how you, a restless spirit, learned?

2003, Logan Square, Philadelphia

A Dream

The night, as I recall it,
was moonless. An
ambiance of demonic
enchantment hung
heavy over grey
concrete parking lot.
It was a carnival of
dead souls, ghost-wedding,
vampire funeral. No
rides, cotton candy,
starlit skies, carousels,
only shades of sniffing
bloodhounds, consumptive
spaces, conglomerations;
strange animal glamour
of spilled blood. Deep
implications of hell, chills.
I awoke: thunder crackled
over the trunks of trees.

Summer 1996, Arden Road, Gulph Mills

Ode On Jazz

Physical beauty, Formal Rigor of God—
spiritual beauty, Economy of God—
Natural Will, Transcendent Will,
Facile Will in all its' dismal "there-ness"—

Piano broken chords breaking down space
like watching bits of paper collect,
contained in a 12-bar blues; root
notes you tend to lean on,
or maybe a honking minor third,
a harmonic multi-colored sharp…

Follow your compulsion into flurries,
clusters of connecting phrases,
then a pause to sanctify as the progression
resolves after lingering on the fifth
for the appointed time—
pentatonics mainly with some suspensions,
sheets of sound, there it is, trademark leaps,
like watching a rainbow erupt
out of the placid bowels of street-lakes,
sparrows in the gutters,
Eliot-esque alienation syncopated
impossibly high and mighty…

Repeat the repetition now into major scale—
Ionian gold, major-third suspensions again,
almost midnight for tremulous trees,
also hipsters, flights of birds, rabbis
in the wilderness as blues ends; here's a quicker
quirkier jarring bit to cut
your teeth on…

Base bottom notes natural like ferns,
ride the ride cymbal like musical fellatio,
roll with rolls and kick-drum ejaculations,
what Hart Crane heard in bridges,
only blues (so bridge seldom comes),
stasis achieved nicely replicates movements,
bowel, kidney, heart-beat, daring snare of lip-ness,
thickness, quickness,
get it all out for all of us into the brick-laden city,

mutter of exhausted midnight buses

as vibrato notes shiver, miniature
solos on the toms creates energy
of emptiness among the weird abundance,
concluding with roll on the snare, now bass
also investigates metaphysical space,
not so much implacable as inexhaustible
eruptions; spring of autumn,
autumn of spring…

Seasons of balance, compromise,
away from extremes; Middle Path exteriorized,
oh piano on a minor seventh which bespeaks
longing for a more ethereal world,
elegiac as the last apple of October, eaten
by a Halloween camp-fire, beyond blues
of Earth into cadence, dying fall of pure moon,
ravaged, torn from the throat of persistence,
mute existence destroyed completely
and on fire, a universe of fingers and mouths,
looking down the tide of Death into eternity,
square-shouldered and erect,
freezing into whims of Ultimate "there-ness",
beyond ordinary notions of quotidian abyss
in one long sitting pow-wow peace-pipe corn-cob
wholesome dinner of Voidness,
but insinuated only to drive away singularity….

Jazz is plural,
they give you a space, show you its' contours,
allow you to move around and drown
if you want over hilltops of remorse, created
by Love or dolorous longing and especially
Central Parks of the soul and intellectual Bordello
life cut and pasting its' bleak outline over rooftops
and bluebirds—

2002, Logan Square, Philadelphia

Song for Maria

My scarlet letter let you in
We rallied on our separate beds
The way to blue was flushed with ice
Your tongue possesses everything

(lighten my,
watch my,
blow my)

In any case, the case is closed
We walk the streets, a trackless train
My verdant prayer is your own skin
I can't believe I'm free again

Relax—

Ice yr drink—

Think—

Pursue a purpose, lost in flame
Become the scum you dote on, crab
The sky, the ground, the square you are
The realm of flesh is one lone purge…

mercy mercy mercy
mercy mercy

Fall 1998, West Nittany Avenue, State College

Dominique

So many stories are wrapped up in this next poem, some hilarious, some harrowing. It all revolves around a single woman and her phenomenal ability to enthrall men. Her name was, and is, Dominique, and I've never met anyone like her. When I met her, I was a high school junior and she was a freshman. She was stunningly beautiful, with a seductive, feline grace that suggested both Lolita and Liv Tyler. This alone wouldn't qualify her to play such an interesting part in my life and the lives of those around me; there were a lot of beautiful girls at Cheltenham; but Dominique had something more. What do we call that ineffable IT, that compelling magnetism that certain people have? Is it merely beauty, or charisma, or youth? For me, Dominique's charm lay in all these things, and also in something extra— a certain mischievous glint in her eye, a certain toss of her head, that suggested a sort of supernatural ecstasy, as if she were walking around in a narcotic trance all the time (which, I was later to learn, she was). Dominique was, quite simply, the most compelling female I'd met up to that point. Oddly enough, I didn't fall hard for her at all. I was able to keep my distance because, to a certain extent, I saw a hollowness beneath the charisma, an unwillingness to dig beneath surfaces and live truly. Dominique for me was a sort of caricature of adolescent sexiness, and I loved her archly condescending smile, but it didn't pierce me to the bone.

My best friend at the time, however, was absolutely, unbelievably, and pitifully smitten. He hung on her every word as though she was Godhead incarnate, recorded every encounter in an especially prized notebook, and just basically made an idiot of himself whenever she was around. Then, Dominique started dating another one of my friends, simultaneously making me her "Man of the Month," and things started to get really messy. A fist fight for me outside math class; a death threat; notes for me in the mail inscribed with lipstick, reading "He finds a deep satisfaction in pain; for that pain comes from her"; and other such nonsense. Basically Chris, aka Mr. Smitten, never forgave me for going after Dominique when he was so desperately in love, while Adam, Mr. Better-Attack-Me-Outside-Math-Class, became contrite years later and started randomly showing up at my gigs, camera in hand.

Having given you this background, you'll probably understand why running into Dominique on a sultry night in the East Village was such a big deal for me. I was lonely as hell in New York, overwhelmed, numbing myself with huge quantities of pot and speed pills. Dominique, for all her cattiness, rose to the occasion and delivered a knock-out performance as supportive friend with benefits. Unsurprisingly, she supported her academic career at NYU by dealing drugs, and I thought it would be fair game to throw that in, seeing as it was honest. Formally, this piece is me trying my best to write like Keats, sort of the same thing William Carlos Williams was doing in his early twenties. For me, WCW's Keatsian poems aren't that good, probably because he didn't know Dominique. She's a Muse— a real, honest-to-God morsel of madness. Not that I've ever forgotten her implacable selfishness, remorseless narcissism and insufferable insularity; but it pays to remember what's best in her.

March 27, 2004, Live at Kelly Writers House, West Philadelphia

Twisted Limbs

Apocalypse out there. Here, endless wheels,
sparks; pockets of restrained and segmented
light. Lovely ways you defy me. Best moments,
always, you on top, when the world ends a little
bit. Warmth between lovers can never be
unnatural. Nor can hostage-taking, or a healthy
regard for oblivion. It's all that's left in common
between us and them: twisted limbs. Our mouths
move like theirs: flips, bites. Our movements
prefigure the same ends: consummated peace,
mediated silence, "deliberate hebetude." We're
with them as a necessary antithesis. They can't
see us. They never could. It's left to us to make
a balance, if we can. We'll need nothing less than luck.

2005, Logan Square, Philadelphia

On Love

What tide is the realest, which pulls in a kiss?
    The rigor of reaching the thing-in-itself,
from subject to object, chaos to bliss,
    our frail intuition of heavenly health?
Our love is not molecules, dumbly colliding,
    nor is it knowledge, formal and static,
        nor is it accident, reasoned and plumbed—
it's real, meta-rational, soaring and gliding,
    felt like an earthquake, bringing up panic,
        taking our parts and achieving a sum.

The greater part of love is sacrifice—
    flesh intermingled, tensing (push!) tingled,
this is the secret I learn from your eyes.
    Giving my body, knotted, single,
tiny eruptions that come from my tongue;
    plunging down surfaces, slicking the flesh,
        thoughtless as leopards or hurricane winds—
watching you shudder, watching you come,
    rapt in the throes of an innocent death,
        giving my life to an inch of your skin.

Thus, we trade in secure oblivion
    for reckless reality, messy and fleeting.
Such is the cosmos— creation, carrion,
    motions of molecules merging and meeting.
Nothing is lost but notions of self-ness,
    hard ideations that close and clatter,
        rages of ego that strain at their walls—
nothing is gained but a sense of the deathless,
    "there-ness" of spirit, "there-ness" of matter,
        ultimate "there-ness" that scares as it calls.

2003, Logan Square, West Philadelphia

Pigs and Planes

I don't believe in poetry.
It's a slant that wavers
around different patches
of sky, or mud chucked
on slats of a sty. Or it
could be the pig, or the
plane, farmer or pilot,
pork-chop industrialist, air-
traffic controller. The one
thing it isn't is itself.
To say poetry is poetry
is a rank offence, post-
misdemeanor, sub-felony,
the sort of sin credulous
people pray against. Pigs
you can believe in, and sties.
Planes you can believe in, and skies.
I don't believe in poetry.

2006, Logan Square, Philadelphia

Song for Genevieve

Flip-flop her legs (so soon!) are perfect
    Sunlight burnishes her kneecaps
She's a swan of smoothness
    A mint to be dissolved in (strong!) tea
An oyster to be de-pearled with two hands

(Yawning
gape
of coagulated
sunset—

Perpetual cricket
buzz sticks
to pure ancient
leaves in breezes—)

She's poignant, pained, church-stained
Gravy-lust, the merchandise of sailors (tides!)
Orally injected (wet!) anti-depressants
You're killing me (Hepburning my body!)
Spread a flag over yr naked back, arch—
over the wall— push!— over the sky;
Stars, planets, universes yarned in a spin;
Navigate the (gated!) grave of the Milky Way;
Eat the chocolate donut of midnight—

Fall 1998, West Nittany Avenue, State College

Stoning the Devil

In Baudelaire's famous prose poem, *The Generous Gambler*, we follow the narrator, ostensibly Charlie B. himself, as he encounters a mysterious stranger on a Parisian boulevard. The stranger, lo and behold, turns out to be Lucifer himself. Baudelaire depicts him as a man of wealth and taste, who has, indeed, been around for many a long year, and stolen many a man's soul and faith. Of course, Baudelaire follows him. They get regally smashed, and the Devil reveals to him the secrets of the universe. For Baudelaire, stoning the devil means getting him stoned, wooing him, bringing him into the human fold for a little Dionysian sport. The problem with the Baudelairian method of Satan-handling is that you lose your soul. The Devil corrupts you to the point that right and wrong have no meaning; irony enters the blood and chills it; paradox becomes poison; everybody looks like a leper; and you can't feel anything. It helps to remember our good old read-it-in-seventh-grade friend Young Goodman Brown. His encounter with Beelzebub leaves him embittered, disenchanted, but at least he still has a soul (or, as much of a soul as a tee-totaling Puritan can have). Young Goodman Brown stones the devil by rejecting him out of hand. Stoning here means throwing stones: even if it be from the glass house of mortal ignorance.

So, somewhere between the Baudelairian and Hawthornian models of Lucifer-human relations, we may find an ideal solution. We can lure the Devil into drunkenness and then bash him over the head with a rock, or we can bash him over the head with a rock and then slip him a joint to ease the pain (mostly our pain, of course). The Devil, the epitome of imperviousness, will go on being the great professional Ironist he is (a bit like Frank Zappa). The reward of this balanced approach for us, as writers, is that we can lure the Devil close to us, just close enough to learn some of his simpler tricks, then send him on his way when he starts demanding blood. Muslims the world over "stone the Devil," but I fear their ritual lacks a certain subtlety and understanding of Satanic grandeur- how it can be harnessed, refined, made to serve human ends. The Devil, more than any other Being, understands the complexity of existence. I would guess that things are as complicated in Hell as they are here. In the end, what is a art but a testament to the complexity of life: manifold levels and layers, perpetually enclosing us in a wide web. One could make the argument that art is essentially ironic, in the sense that it posits unreachable worlds that we long for, but cannot touch. We must face it: art is a Devil's game. We're here to play, and we guarantee you it will be more fun than Yahtzee.

March 27, 2004, Live at Kelly Writers House, West Philadelphia

What Needs No Myth

after W.B. Yeats

The actuality of summer leaves wavering—
water gushing from springs— wind redolent
with sap— will never be enough to fill great
chasms of self-consciousness, emptiness of

death-fearing despair. If we could only learn
to watch waves of the sea— what needs no
myth never stops coming. No Sphinx waits in
the desert— nothing slouches towards Bethlehem—

no preternatural reality waits to replace what
never was. Ghosts predominate— slouch, blood-
dimmed tide built into them. Meanwhile, actual
falcons manifest the miracle of flight— harbingers

of the endless— winging the air, persevering.
It is a matter of mathematics, of where the numbers
end. Or space, our real home— inscrutably expansive,
unbelievable. There is no judgment in space.

Asteroids come out of the void— full-bodied, hurtling,
bent on something. Stars live and die, to no
appreciable avail comprehensible to us. There is
enough wonder in the Universe to befuddle

a thousand sages. Jesus on the cross is simple
by comparison. Each reductive model bends
the Collective Unconscious further towards
breakage. Sodden with suffering, the great

unassimilated incorrigibly search beneath
the stratosphere. Who understands that
breaking the circle is a precondition to well-
roundedness? Having achieved existence,

even Buddha sat by the bo tree a little
eternity, rounding myths into pebbles, pebbles
into myths—

September 20, 2003, Live at Kelly Writers House, West Philadelphia

Feel

I.

I saw the greatest artists of my generation parched, hardened & scarred
by a virtual machine,
blood cleaned from shiny surfaces, purposed to cut out the soul's wisdom, the body's
agita, the heart's
heaviness, creators neutered and spayed by a decaying empire, wired
for a never-ending battle
with bureaucrats, corporate drones and art-world phonies, bones rattling
in Philly February snow and ice,
D.C.'s perpetual snooze, loose NYC streets that tighten round the Village,
while they tried to chill-pill themselves,
direct their energy to the task at hand, finding a plan, an escape route from playing
cogs, greased-gears freezing all around them—
who worked for banks and were fired for downloading porn, moved into dank South Philly
studios, recorded, put out CDs, whored themselves to wine-stores & occult dives
where poor mottled matrons paid ten dollars for card readings & felt themselves
bleed at the collapse of the Tower,
who stripped, did coke, published poems on the Net, learned massage, started as Temps,
ended as Temps, sang dirges at West Philly art-parties for free Schlitz, dove-
tailed joints in brick alleyways, scars glossed over with blush, sweaty-breasted,
who wrote comic book epics for guitar and voice, developed mystical Jesus raps at Goth
clubs, Christian-blissed as Trent Reznor blared through stacks of amps and love-
boys got blow-jobs in corners,
who were pregnant at 21, had and ignored the kid, got locked in jail for neglect, expecting
daddy to come with bail, no help from a shitty city,
who threw out poetry to work for an architect, drank w/ kids in Manayunk bars
and got a beer-gut, "make it new" screwed into soft-fucks,
who were forced into drag by failure, post-avant punk records dis-chorded into oblivion,
scarcely attended bumper-boring tours from Alaska to Milan,
who made the cover of the City Paper, lost a sugar-mommy and dealt coke, wigger pants,
trench-coated, eyes bleary, nose runny, walking round and round liquor
stores miming interest in Pinot Grigio,
who got on planes to London to live in sardine tins, no sex for two years, music biz lies
don't work even near the Hyde Park Serpentine,
who spent afternoons at McGlinchy's cadging Manhattans, making out with strangers,
blowing band dudes with Ron Wood haircuts, dreaming of a Khyber stage &
the place packed,
who lost a hustler father to heart failure, took Greyhounds to Atlantic City weekends, put
trust-fund dollars on poker chips glistening black in the lurid light, ice rattling
in gin tumblers, Italian pimps leaning forward for the kill in silk pants,
who painted Apollos and Athenas in high-windowed studios in the Gilbert Building,
getting laid on pull-out black sofas stained cadmium red,
who went to D.C. to lobby, did puppet shows miming councilmen in Philly, gave up lit
to look for kinks in The System & were left holding onions in the Italian
Market,

who managed Chinese restaurants in State College, sang shirtless for bands at the White Lodge, sailed off to Oregon looking for a label,
who followed two L.A. chicks from Bar Noir to Ocean City, snorting H off a hotel toilet & becoming a ghost & drifting down halls & collapsing on carpeted stairs,
who played soccer with tin cans on summer afternoons in alleys off of South Street, Blow Fly singing "you're too fat to fuck" in the background,
who took in jail-bait to complete a ménage a trios, then watched her try to jump out the window of the Highwire Gallery, strip at parties but for a thong, get arrested for stealing from a Verizon register, all the while keeping two boyfriends in South Jersey, construction workers, blind to the bricks,
who spent nights chasing hipster-girls in Upper Darby, paying the cab-fare from Dirty Frank's, then left to rot on the downstairs couch surrounded by plastic Christmas candles & a mother's footsteps down the stairs,
who curated minor shows at the Kelly Writer's House, dreaming of future glory, having Koons & Schnabel show up and kiss ass to the one and only,
who shouted at drunken idiots through bull-horns on 4th Street Mardi Gras, perched in windows like Dada ready-made patrolmen,
who took girls to the Walnut Street Bridge and laid in the grass at midnight, 'til cops white blazing light scared their pants on in the summer mist,
who stumbled half-awake onstage at Doc Watson's, ploughed through a short set and sat at the bar knocking back Tequilas, eager for the next gig,
Grape Street, Pontiac Grille, La Tazza, Balcony, hallowed stages where the eternally neglected Philly bands knocked out Fixx-mixed Corgan-riffed Patti Smith blues, watched by no one in particular, and thus by the Gods,
who started independent newspapers and did press-runs of 10,000, garnering national acclaim and absolutely no money,
who worked nights at the Taco House on Pine Street, smoking pot in the back room, scribbling notes for an endless first novel to be read at Molly's Books while despair unfolded of ever knowing anything about sex,
and who therefore threw out a U of Arts degree to strip, thinking of Colette & Courtney Love, wanting to know what this flesh thing was all about,
who died in obscurity in Roxborough, then had volumes of poems thrown away by a jealous lover who was somehow managing the estate, & is therefore even more obscure, Alexandra, unacknowledged legislator of Philly lit, stalking health food at Essene, reading at Robin's, always taking the bus, a car too much hassle & no time to scribble poems in the back,
what were you working for if not eternity? Your name up in the klieg lights of greatness, may happen yet, some of us are holding a torch, will continue to, for you—
who had pictures taken w/ Allen Ginsberg, then locked themselves in the house once the Painted Bride Quarterly was gone for good,
who were reduced to writing fishing books when the poetry wouldn't fly, then insisted on comparing themselves to Joyce, Proust, & Kafka,
who hooked up w/ metal-faced teenagers in stairwells, sucking on brass where a nipple should've been, riding a nitrous high into a screened window,
who met guys on the Internet & moved up to Philly from Florida, settled in studios at Juniper & Locust & were watched by pervs in the parking lot next door,
& then joined spoken-word bands & did shows in baby-doll dresses, took up w/ a poet,

got cheated on by a poet & went back to Florida & came back again,
who decorated an apartment w/ fourteen dead Christmas trees, licked up pine needles on slow nights & had whiskey-drunk one-night stands to kill time,
who decided to move to L.A., was psyched to move to L.A., got everything packed to move to L.A. & then realized that there wasn't any money left,
or moved to L.A. via Daddy's money & helped sign bands to major labels, gave up painting, got a new boyfriend & turned into a palm tree,
who appointed themselves guardians of Duchamp's bikes, staged toilet races in Old City, installed grungy bathtubs, humongous cheese graters & doodles of teeth being shaved in space 1026, welded themselves to the Last Drop & the Bean, were followed by throngs of Dada-minded hipsters, then went into hiding,
who bought condos off Washington Square, were ripped off by newspapers, wrestled w/ an incomplete second novel & an NYC agent w/ a talent for evasion,
who wrote columns for Philly Weekly & earned the hatred of hipsters for loving Simon & Garfunkel, saw the world behind thick glasses, wrote songs & earned a modest following & was then murdered by a divorce,
who found themselves up against an Ivy League wall, fought the Philistines w/ Keats, & made Penn bow down to the genius of Wordsworth,
who sat in coffee shops talking poetics & politics, acknowledging the impotence of the current generation in fighting Bush & his cronies,
& also acknowledging that this generation is a small generation & virtual & unlikely to change anything substantial now that the Boomers run everything, & it'll be this way 'til they die out, thirty more years of boredom,
who served cocktails to Centrist poets in Boston, had miscellaneous affairs w/ Philly writers & others, wanted to be Bonnie & Clyde w/ out Clyde,
who made a mint off a rock record in Japan, spent it all & started Temping, all the while looking to keep falling in love all the time in the Village,
who put together multi-media shows, served hash brownies & whiskey, made a little money & used it to buy more hash,
who e-mailed Noam Chomsky, decided not to be Zionist & took off a Star-of-David, realizing that the Holy Land is only an interior reality,
who went to live on a kibbutz & came back disillusioned w/ everything & not having fought in the army went out & bought guns instead,
who fled to San Francisco for no apparent reason after putting out a book in Philly & watching it sit unmolested at Book Trader,
who was fired from Barnes & Noble for feeling up female employees, worked in a loony bin, wrote in the loony bin, then caved in & joined the Masters program at Temple,
who roamed Villanova searching for dead souls, waiting for the words to come back as years slipped away into a haze of academic mediocrity,
who stood in line w/ bags of pasta at dollar stores, picked up butts from sidewalks, took resin hits, chomped on bits of stale bread & shat in buckets,
who did Action paintings on cold nights in Northern Liberties, slaved away at Office Cents lugging parcels around Center City, latched onto female grad students w/
swank apartments & made slow-motion art movies of silent screams & hollering demons wading through the half-frozen Delaware,

who painted Kabbalistic cool-color fantasies & sent them to Tyler openings, managed restaurants & threw canvases away & walked around Germantown awaiting the arrival of the Sixth Race who will cool the Earth & set it on the Tree of Life & protect it from malignant ministers of Malkuth,
who retreated to Philly after 9/11 to find the city half-dead & the sinking stink of global warming hovering over Rittenhouse Square like a huge clove of garlic, & the vampires w/ Gucci glasses wandering & watching & warping what tenderness remained for lovers of cigars & Salman Rushdie,
who mourned for Rachel Corrie from a perch at the Good Dog, wrote secret pro-Palestinian pamphlets & hid them under socks & condoms,
who tried painting & poetry & music but found the balance in yoga, only to find the yogic mind devalued in the capitalist slip-stream of a run-down economy, & thus made plans to go to New Mexico for the summer & squat amidst clay,
who found themselves a million miles away from everything on Race Street, so retreated to Cherry St. to hit on Moore girls & manicure-giving bar-maids, & took one home & found her ready & then was too drunk to fuck,
who ploughed through five years PHD work to find a vacant job market & the few open classes not enough to pay rent, so built houses in the 'burbs & sipped Bud in rabbi's back yards hearing stories of Moses & Joshua & Aaron, & the story of Job hit a special nerve,
who got fat in Bainbridge Street lofts living off pot-dealing money, writing landscape poems remembering Virginia beaches & a shiksa's skinny little ass, how much give it had or didn't have as it bobbed up & down in the waves,
who met booty calls on the Franklin Institute steps & got naked & boned watched by Jane across the street fingering herself secretly,
who got sent to Budapest by parents to study math, having failed out of Penn & Temple & having been burned out by years of scraping three-chord riffs & hitting bars & orgies & all the time wondering why things seemed so empty,
who were exiled to academic New Hampshire, poems in hand, devising childhood vignettes of coffee Moms & smoking Dads & cold mornings out on Federal,
who kept afloat writing copy for Urban Outfitter's, getting blitzed at poetry parties & up-staging ex-boyfriends w/ yuppie-puppy hook-ups,
who worked as concierge at the Four Seasons, scored w/ a pale blonde bookstore chick only to have a bookstore Byron steal her back & write about it,
& you have to see him every day, he's always lurking in odd
café corners & no one knows what he's thinking or why,
(& in fact no one knows what anybody's thinking, it's a sin & a drag & candor is in short supply in an artificial virtual era, & our "there" is nowhere),
who collapsed in lines at Starbucks, knocking over displays of gourmet tea, spent two weeks in the psych ward at Jefferson, visited by solicitous boyfriends bearing chocolate & coffee table Raphael books & playing ping pong for hours while several schizophrenics huddle together watching "Sleepless in Seattle",
who picked up photographers in coffee-shops & boned them sans condom on piles of black & white prints,
who prowled through suburbs w/ a half-lit bowl, passing dread Cheltenham where endless tears flowed through virginal misery, stopping for a deep hit by the old house drowning nostalgia in thick green smoke,
who toured the world & got famous & threw it away for a needle & couldn't sleep for the

thought that the thing could never happen again,
who sat at Gleaners waiting for contracting jobs, played UNO & Scrabble &were masters of both, well-spoken beneath knitted caps & trapped as lame tigers,
who got knocked up by Rastafarians & were left to raise babies on a waitress's salary, picking up tips & shit for being bitter, sister at home keeping the baby fed,
who wrestled demons of bi-polarity tool-box in hand, looking for lost screws & sockets, fixing locks toilets hinges refrigerators, hoping the voices wouldn't come at an important moment, rattling through the ether w/ a sinister cackle, mocking the silliness of ever doing anything other than smoke drink & fuck,
who were flushed out of New Orleans like a tampon back into the soot of Spruce Street, drinking through frigid winter Philly doldrums, mornings too raw for walking, too-white music in the clubs, no mint juleps on the menu, only Jager & Jack & Stoli & Captain Morgan's,
who got it on w/ keyboardists for riot grrl bands in bathtubs flooding tiles splashing walls all for ten seconds of the ultimate chorus,
who slept w/ a different guy every night two months then took a year off writing confessional verse on My-Space for 40,000 friends,
every one of whom wanted sex, love, a chance to hold somebody tenderly & forget that the whole virtual charade ever happened,
who labored through slow days in Philadelphia's dead-end streets, breezes annoyingly sharp where Market hits City Hall & the Broad Street line gets off,
who took the Broad Street Line to Allegheny to look at an art gallery as possible event-space but found a rat-infested shit-hole w/ a few bad Basquiat imitations on the wall & a toilet dripped on not by Pollock & a floor that would inspire another Munch & a girl from the Northeast before a mirror but only too round,
& who was forced to shut-down a co-op that no one could run any more in a fractious scene in a fractious city in a fractious country in a fractious era,
a fractious world where the artist counts for shit & waits for shit to happen that can't happen anymore because the numbers aren't there anymore the guns are,
the artist plays w/ guns, runs around shooting blanks at a dead world, curved into himself like an ingrown nail, hailed randomly by strangers to carry boulders up hills & teach the children, the noble artist looks for the transcendent will
the natural will the will-to-form, the will to turn around the deadness into something else a place where hope lives & allows one to cope w/ what's been dead in America for years the spirit the spirit the feeling that things are progressing must progress that progress can be made & there's no reason to wait for anyone else to do it cause why should they it falls on the artist to create it all him or her self & that's
what they've done & what they're doing & if a new dawn awaits or if it doesn't the the struggle goes on to put things down that mean something more than nothing which in this day & age means a hell of a lot because it's worth everything & you can't quantify it if you tried

II.

What hung over Philly, NYC, D.C., what swept through the freezing streets w/ sleet & cold snow?
Virtual women on cell-phones clicking buttons talking Jolie Spears & Simpson, stopping in boutiques to try on blouses & purses & cursing maxed credit cards!
Virtual men in suits & London fog overcoats talking numbers figures & prospects betting

on Phillies Fliers Nationals Eagles living vicariously through overpaid clowns!
Virtual tunes on the radio, three chord synth-driven sappy cliché-ridden tripe belted out by Whitney Britney & Mariah, plush beat-programmed god-damned garbage!
Virtual movies w/ impossible sex scenes everything falling into place perfectly for two perfect bodies sans sloppiness of real caresses & how people look undressed!
Virtual galleries showing warmed over nihilistic facile installations of piles of rubbish lugged in w/ out skill craft or love sitting in a dump masquerading as art!
Virtual ads for virtual products gum that chews better Old Navy sweaters McDonald's hamburgers Toyotas Hondas Oldsmobiles hot wheels for prosperous suburban jerks jamming up expressways carbon dioxide flying into an atmosphere of used to be American greatness faded into days of fat complacence!
Virtual leaders vomiting sound-bites for virtual commentators Fox News CNN spouting platitudinous blarney to keep the asshole half of the country happy w/ a disastrous administration bucking the Kyoto treaty to keep oil flowing & wiping out regimes for no good reason other than crude black crap to kill forests!
Virtual TV "illustrating imbecile illusions of happiness" inducing mass spiritual slumber humming a nation to sleep believing everything's OK as long as Will & Grace stay happy inside the little idiot box on four hours a night!
Virtual bars & conversations knocking back twenty lagers & pints of Jagermeister trying to forget years frittered away in pursuit of music that didn't work paintings that didn't sell movies that went unseen as the world swirled by denying they ever knew or cared what art was!
Virtual love affairs based on fucking can't say what you're feeling but kneel before the altar of sex for its' own sake magazine culture!
Virtual friends virtually loving virtually hugging virtually drugging each other on the Internet fretting waiting for e-mail games of who writes first!
Virtual Jesus virtual Moses virtual Buddha virtual Jewish pleas to please return to Baruch Atah Adonai Elohanu Melech Chaolom,
Blessed art thou Lord of the Universe Forever & Ever Amen now please give me Bar Mitzvah money to spend on Nintendo Super Mario & a hot new I-Pod ready for instant use on spring afternoons before Hebrew School,
& the world is only virtually holy anymore & holiness can be bought in any store where money changes hands cause solvency is Heaven Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will Be Done our Father, Holy Ghost & Son delivered all in holy green!

III.

suffer ye victims
of a virtual age!
suffer ye victims
of Microsoft rage!
suffer ye noble,
wayward as Shelley,
suffer ye hopeful,
fire in belly!
suffer a new, bitter, screwed, littered America!
suffer ye who know Jesus w/ out casting

stones!
suffer the action abandoned to dumbness,
suffering the actions unspoken & loveless,
suffering the action unfurling our country,
picking up oil & oil-soaked money!

IV.
Allen Ginsberg! I'm w/ you in Heaven
where we feel like two sages,
where bread is unleavened
& no *granfalloon* rages!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where the air is like nitrous,
where deadness is deadened
& you're plagued by no virus!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where the feeling is placid,
where we're ruled by no felon
& lay tripping on acid!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where the Buddha is grinning,
where no self-schemas leaden
lead to feelings of sinning!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where poetry's money,
where the moon's always setting
& the sky's always sunny!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where each spirit is sexy,
where you love who you're bedding
& you touch them correctly!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where no fame is too famous,
where you know what you're getting
& all power is blameless!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where each spirit can run things,
where self-governed settlements
take place of gun-slings!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where America's perfect,
where the states have no nettles
& the taxes are worth it!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where we're writing this poem,
where we're secretly betting

how far we can throw 'em!
I'm w/ you in Heaven
where the jokes are Eternal,
where the Hope is unfettered
& the dope is supernal!
I'm w/ you in Heaven,
where I'll stay 'til the war ends,
where I'll lay w/ your blessing
in the shade of a God-Head!

V.

Apocalypse! Apocalypse! It's over! It's over! We're living in twilight! Twilight the streets, twilight the houses, twilight the beats, twilight the louses! This is Rome, this is Nero, this is home, this is Zero! Apocalypse! Apocalypse! It's ending! Ending the guns, ending the money, ending the sun, ending the honey— bums, guns, sex, drugs, scum, Jesus, love, reason, all over! All ending! All covered! All bending! This is Rome, this is Egypt, this is feces! It's over! We're living in the End-Times! Over the getting, over the spending, over the feeling, over the lending! Forests, traffic, mountains, madness, plaster suburbs, drastic lovers, over! Apocalypse! Apocalypse! Twilight the schools, twilight the college, twilight the fools, twilight the knowledge! Twilight degrees, twilight alone, twilight & freeze, twilight unknown! Ending the quest, ending the artist, ending the rest, ending the parties! This is Rome, this Atlantis, this is home, this is hopeless! Dope, smoke, Starbucks, Hotmail, gropes, jokes, spirit e-mail, souls, moles, used car salesmen, fags, hags, gun-mad mailmen! Apocalypse! Apocalypse even for the faithful! Even for the Enlightened! Even for the patient! Even for the frightened! Even for the transcendent unbending resplendent defended art-mensch! Apocalypse! Run for shelter! Run for cover! Helter-skelter! Find a lover! Do something! Hold something! Screw something! Do someone! Before the end that's coming! Before the end that's drumming! Before the end of suffer! Before the end of lover! Act, suffer, feel, act, suffer, feel, & do it & do it again! Over the time when you live in a rhyme & it's okay to rest & to slowly confess! Apocalypse! Apocalypse! It's over! It's over!

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